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NSC BRIEFING

28 May 1956

LATE DEVELOPMENTS ON EGYPTIAN RECOGNITION OF PEIPING

1. Cairo's 16 May decision to recognize Communist China has stirred some favorable comment in other Middle East countries and improved chances for further Chinese Communist diplomatic gains in the area. Peiping is following through hard to exploit the Egyptian action, but an immediate landslide of recognition appears unlikely. Additional Chinese Communist successes among the Arab states may occur, however, before the November meeting of the UN General Assembly.

2. Arab public reaction to Egyptian recognition of Communist China has been favorable--in some states warmly enthusiastic. Official reaction has been mixed, however, and suggests that other Arab states, with the possible exception of Syria, will go slow on moves to follow Egypt's lead.

a. US Embassy Damascus reports that "eventual" Syrian recognition of Communist China is likely because such a step has the advantage of Egyptian sponsorship, enjoys popular support and "will be actively pushed" by Syrian leftists and possibly by the army. The Syrian press has argued that, since the US has "swallowed Nasr's daring step", there would be nothing to fear from American anger should Syria also extend recognition to Peiping.

b. The Sudan might climb on the bandwagon after Syrian recognition. In Jordan, where a pro-Egyptian government has recently come to power, a move to recognize Peiping appears increasingly possible, and Yemen may also prove susceptible to Egyptian pressure.

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Lebanon and Libya

will probably not recognize Peiping at this time, and Iraq intends to continue its relations with the Nationalists.

3. Broadcasts from Peiping have celebrated Egyptian recognition as a great victory over "colonialism", which has "opened the gate" for similar moves by other "liberated" Arab states. The Chinese claim that their "great advances" in political, cultural, religious and trade contacts with Egypt mark a "growing solidarity" between Communist China and the Arab countries. Peiping's campaign, keyed to Middle East nationalist sentiments, has been echoed by the Egyptians.

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Cairo is also applying diplomatic pressure for recognition to the other Arab states.

4. Since the Egyptian announcements, the Chinese Communists have invited not only Premier Nasr and an Egyptian military delegation but also an important Moslem religious leader, Ahmad Al-Baquri, to visit Peiping. On 24 May, Cairo announced acceptance of these invitations, but no dates have yet been set. Meanwhile, a Cairo press report states that an invitation from Nasr to Premier Chou En-lai to pay a visit to Cairo has also been accepted, without a date being set.

5. Press reports say diplomatic missions exchanged by Cairo and Peiping are to be on the ambassadorial level.

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the Egyptian representative in Peiping will be Brigadier Gen Hasan Raghieb, now Egyptian Undersecretary of State for War and Navy. Raghieb is generally given credit for working out details of the Soviet-Egyptian arms deal.

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7. Absence of official date announcements on Nasr's Peiping trip or Chou's visit to Cairo suggest that both the Egyptians and the Chinese are holding off, pending possible successes in bringing other Arab states into line on recognition. Chou would certainly prefer to postpone his visit to Egypt until recognition by other Arab states made it possible to stage some sort of triumphal progress through the Middle East, perhaps just prior to the UN General Assembly meeting in November.

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